

PentaHealth's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Charles P. Catania, found the below article by The Skin Care Foundation to contain recommended insight regarding sunscreen and skin care prevention. He wanted to share this with our patients.

Please call your PentaHealth practice if you have a concern about your skin.

Sun Protection

The sun sustains life and feels good, but it can be your skin's worst enemy. While every sunburn can increase your risk of skin cancer, it's not just those big days at the beach or ballgame that cause trouble. Each time you run out to get the mail, walk the dog or commute to work without sun protection adds to the damage that can lead to skin cancer (as well as leathery skin, dark spots, and wrinkles).

No single method of sun defense can protect you perfectly, though. That's why we created this roundup of advice for you. The best path to beautiful, healthy skin is to adopt as many of these steps as possible into your lifestyle, and make them daily habits everywhere you go, all year long.

Clothing can provide a great barrier against the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. Its protection is consistent over time and doesn't wear off like sunscreen does. The more skin you cover (high neck, long sleeves, pants), the better, and a hat with a wide brim all the way around (three inches or more) is best because it helps shade your eyes, ears, face, and neck. Also wear UV-blocking sunglasses to protect your eyes and the skin around them.

Look for UPF, which stands for ultraviolet protection factor, on labels for clothing, hats, and fabrics. The number indicates what fraction of the sun's UV rays can penetrate the fabric. A shirt labeled UPF 50, for example, allows just 1/50th of the UV radiation to reach your skin.

Know your sunscreen, whether it's a sport spray, an easy-to-use stick or a rich moisturizer with antiaging ingredients, the best sunscreen is the one you will use every day.

SPF stands for sun protection factor: The number tells you how long the sun's UVB rays would take to redden your skin when using a particular sunscreen compared with the amount of time without sunscreen. So, if you use an SPF 15 product exactly as directed (applied generously and evenly and reapplied after two hours or after sweating or swimming), it will take you 15 times longer to burn than if you weren't wearing sunscreen.

Broad spectrum: The words "broad spectrum" on a label indicate that the sunscreen contains ingredients that effectively protect against UVA rays as well as UVB.

Water resistance: While sunscreens can't claim to be waterproof, they can be labeled water resistant for either 40 or 80 minutes. Yes, you can burn even when you're in the water, so reapplying is key!

Sensitive skin: Products containing zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, sometimes referred to as mineral or physical formulas, may be less likely to cause skin irritation in people who have sensitive skin.

Infants: It's best in the first six months to keep infants out of the sun rather than use sunscreen on their sensitive skin. Clothing should cover baby's vulnerable arms and legs, and don't forget to use hats, sunglasses, and stroller sunshades.

Toddlers: In addition to providing a protective hat and clothing, you can apply sunscreen to children starting at six months.

Early detection starts with you. Using sun protection consistently from an early age is the strongest defense against developing skin cancer. No person or method is perfect, though, and one in five Americans will develop skin cancer by the age of 70.

All adults should do monthly skin self-exams and see a dermatologist annually, or more frequently if they see something suspicious or have risk factors.

Sun Protection. The Skin Cancer Foundation. (2022, January 28). <https://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-prevention/sun-protection/>